

# To the Chairman and Members of the Hardingstone Rural District Council.

FEBRUARY, 1914.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Report for the year 1913, with the usual Tables. In estimating the population of the district, I have allowed for a slight decrease in accordance with the result shown at the last census.

The total number of births was 167, namely, 80 boys and 87 girls. This is the largest number of births during the last six years, giving a ratio of 22 per 1,000—last year there were only 125 births and the ratio was 16·3.

The total number of deaths at all ages was 119, and this again is the largest number of deaths in the district during the last six years and gives a ratio of 15·8 per 1,000. The ratio in the six years has varied from 13·3 to 11, so the rise is rather considerable, but no less than 20 of these deaths occurred in persons over 80 years of age.

There were, however, only three deaths from infectious disease this year against eight last year—one from enteric fever, one from measles, and one in an old person from influenza. There were only eight deaths from cancer, against 10 and 11 in the previous years, but there were 23 deaths from lung diseases against six in 1913. Eight deaths were attributed to cancer, and five, all in young children, to diarrhœa.

The number of deaths in children under one year of age was 14, but as there were more births the ratio per 1,000 births is only 83·8, whilst in the previous year with only 10 deaths the ratio was nearly the same, 81. In 1908, there were 18 deaths and the ratio was 120. Five of these deaths were due to bronchitis and pneumonia and three to diarrhœa and enteritis. The remaining deaths were attributed to convulsions and premature birth or debility.

Causes of death in children under one year of age during the last seven years :—

Zymotic Diseases	...	...	...	...	6
Convulsions	...	...	...	...	6
Congenital Malformation, Premature Birth and Debility..					43
Diarrhœa	...	...	...	...	6
Bronchitis and Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	19
Tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	2
Other causes	...	...	...	...	7
					<hr/> 89 <hr/>

This table was drawn up after the receipt of a circular from the Local Government Board on epidemic diarrhœa and the feeding of infants. It shows that in this district, at any rate, by far the largest mortality in this class is due to congenital causes or weakness at birth and respiratory diseases. Only six deaths were due to diarrhœa and as three of these occurred in 1913, there were only three deaths from this cause during the six previous years. Deaths from zymotic disease are few and it is impossible to prevent these while such diseases as measles and whooping cough are constantly being imported into our villages from the towns. The deaths from tuberculosis are very small.

Table II. shows the number of infectious cases notified during the year. The total number of these, excluding seven cases of chicken pox, which is not notified in other districts,

was 48. Most of the ordinary infectious diseases are represented in the list this year, but diphtheria seems almost to have disappeared from the district and scarlet fever this year has taken its place : thus there were only two cases of diphtheria notified as against 31 of scarlet fever, whilst in the previous years there were 13 and 31 cases of diphtheria and only three and one of scarlet fever respectively. The two cases of diphtheria were again isolated cases at Castle Ashby and Yardley Hastings, and there were no further cases, neither could I trace their origin ; of late years this has been the case especially in the latter village. Two cases of puerperal fever were reported but both were very mild ; from my enquiries I found a doctor attended both cases, no instruments were used, and the trouble in each case arose from retention of a piece of membrane or placenta, on the removal of which the symptoms subsided. Three cases of enteric fever were notified—the first was a very slight case at Hackleton, for which no cause could be found. The second was a very severe and fatal case, at Denton, in a comparatively elderly woman ; she attributed her illness to the fact that they had lately been cleaning out a very foul midden next door. The closets, however, in this row are all on the old-fashioned midden system and very near the cottages, but the landlord has promised to re-organize them and connect them with the village sewers. The third case occurred to a boy at Piddington. The village pump was exactly opposite this door and on enquiry they complained that they had lately tasted disinfectants in the water. There seems little doubt that there must have been a leakage from the village sewer which is near the well. The case has only occurred quite recently, but the pump has been locked up for the present and the sewer and well will both be thoroughly overhauled. Of the 31 cases of scarlet fever, 27 occurred in Denton. It was a very mild epidemic—so mild that that accounts for its spread since the first cases were not recognized till the children were found to be peeling, so they had been going about with other children and thus spreading the disease. One other case was reported from Hardingstone—a youth, aged 20, who was a painter, and who curiously had first been engaged in stripping the wall paper from a house in which there had been a case of scarlet fever the previous year. The other cases arose in the village of Wootton, and probably came from Northampton, as so many people in this village work in that town.

The Schools at Hackleton were closed in the beginning of the year for six weeks on account of an epidemic of measles, and the Schools at Denton were closed for three weeks on account of the scarlet fever outbreak.

Sixteen cases of scarlet fever have been treated in our Infectious Hospital during the year. Thirteen of these cases came from our district and three cases were admitted from the Northampton Rural District.

*Tuberculosis.*—Seven cases of pulmonary tuberculosis have been reported and one case of tuberculosis of the metatarsal bones in a child, but besides these, two deaths from pulmonary tuberculosis have been recorded in cases not previously notified. Nine deaths were certified as due to pulmonary tuberculosis, but of course some of these were cases from the previous year. Of the seven cases notified four have died ; these had all been treated at home and declined, for various reasons, to be removed to a sanatorium ; the same remark applies to the other three cases, but the case of tubercular disease of the foot is under treatment at the Northampton General Hospital. It is unfortunate that these cases so often refuse sanatorium treatment, but arrangements for a County Sanatorium are not yet complete ; when they are I hope this difficulty will subside. In the meantime we do all that is possible by providing literature, spitting bottles and disinfectants, and thorough disinfection after fatal cases.

#### *Housing and Town Planning Acts.*

Number of houses inspected	...	...	75
Houses unfit for habitation	...	...	1
Houses remedied without closing orders	...	...	1
Number of closing orders made	...	...	0
Defects remedied without making closing orders	...	...	61

Structural repairs—floors, roofs, &c.	...	...	18
Filthy houses cleaned, whitewashed, &c.	...	...	16
Drains repaired or connected with sewers	...	...	21
Yards repaved, &c.	...	...	5
Cases of overcrowding	...	...	1
			<hr/> 61 <hr/>

Plans for the erection of six new houses have been passed by the Council and they have been built or are in course of erection.

*Sanitary Inspector's Report.*

			Inspections.		Notices.
Dairies and Cowsheds	...	...	48	...	10
Slaughter-houses	...	...	44	...	5
Bake-houses	...	...	34	...	6
Insanitary Ashpits and Closets	...	...	24	...	18
Drains connected to Sewers...	...	...	11	...	4
Overcrowding	...	...	1	...	1
Pigsties	...	...	7	...	5

The notices in the first three cases were for whitewashing and one bakehouse was re-floored.

The slaughter-houses were mostly visited when slaughtering was in progress; only one doubtful case was found and most of the carcass was allowed to be sold, the remainder being destroyed.

Besides the above, the following have been rectified :—

One foul ditch has been cleaned.

Eight new closets built.

Forty-one houses disinfected and cleansed after infectious disease.

*Sewage Schemes.*—The Piddington sewage scheme has now been completed. It did not work quite satisfactorily at first and an alteration was made in the effluent pipe: it is now working well.

There were complaints about the working of the Roade sewage beds caused by flooding after severe storms when crude sewage was carried into the brook. Alterations have now been made and it is hoped that the nuisance will not recur, but it is too soon at present to be certain.

A flushing tank has also been built on the sewer at Hardingstone so as to more efficiently flush the low lying part of the sewer and prevent it from getting blocked.

Minor repairs have been needed at Brafield and Yardley Hastings but on the whole these systems have been working efficiently.

A yearly complaint has again been made by Mr. Cockerill about the Great Houghton sewage fouling the brook in his field, but the effluent from our works was found to be perfectly clear and odourless. On investigation the nuisance seemed to come from his own cottage close by the sewage outlet which enters the brook without being treated: notice has been served on him to abate the nuisance.

*Water Supply.*—No complaints have been received as to shortage of water where public supplies have been provided. It is desired, however, to put more closets at Denton into the sewers, and a fear has been expressed that there will then be an insufficiency of water for flushing purposes on account of the small size of the reservoir. A Special Committee of the Council is now considering how this can be remedied. In other parts of the district the



supply appears to be sufficient but at Milton the water in some cases has to be carried a considerable distance.

Two samples of water have been analysed—one was good and one was certified as unfit for consumption and the well was closed.

*Factory Acts.*—There are three places where offensive trades are carried on in the district—one gut scraping, one horse slaughtering and boiling, and one fellmongering. They have all been kept clean and the only complaint that has been received was as to the last named. The nuisance complained of in this case was probably caused by a change of foreman, but the proprietor of the works has promised that it shall not again occur.

The Factories and Workshops, very few in number, have been regularly inspected and the requirements of the Act have been fulfilled.

*Midwifery Acts.*—Two cases of puerperal fever were notified and have been already reported on. In no case could any blame be attached to a nurse and disinfecting measures only were needed.

In this district one village nurse is employed in the villages of Roade and Courteenhall and another in Great and Little Houghton and Brafield.

*Housing Accommodation.*—The Local Government Board have requested that they may be furnished this year with “information as to the character and sufficiency of houses for the working classes and the condition and fitness for habitation of such houses, and particulars as to cases of overcrowding.”

This has led me to make more strict enquiries and to modify somewhat my former views. I have had certain tables drawn out which bear on these matters, but as our Sanitary Inspector has practically only been at work one year the information at present is rather meagre. The first table shows the accommodation in the various cottages that have been inspected this year under the Housing and Town Planning Act. It must be understood, however, that these cottages are probably the worst in the district as any doubtful ones are first inspected. The five lower class of dwellings bear an extremely close relation to those in the Northampton Rural District, where 165 houses have been inspected, so that the ratio of these cottages in the villages round Northampton is probably similar. Taking the figures for the two districts we find for the three largest classes :—

15 per cent.	have	1 bedroom,	1 sitting-room.
35	“ “ “	2 “	1 “ “
28	“ “ “	2 “	2 “ “
13	“ “ “	3 “	1 or 2 “ “
—			
91	“ “		
—			

The remaining 9 per cent. have more rooms than the above ; but this ratio is certainly too low and will be raised when more houses have been reported upon. I see no objection to houses with one bedroom and one sitting-room as long as they are kept for one person or a married couple with one child, and a sharp look-out is maintained by the Inspector that overcrowding should not occur in this class. There are a very great number of elderly people in this district which is shown by the large number of deaths (20) this year in people over 80 years of age, and these cottages are sufficient for such old couples. I thought that the large number of this class was due to the migration of the younger members of the family into the towns, but it has been pointed out to me that a large number of the old people come from the town to end their days in the country where rents are so much cheaper. I have also heard grumbling to the same effect in the villages, that these old people come and become successful candidates for some of the village charities, which in their opinion ought only to be given to true villagers.

It is in the two classes where there are only two bedrooms that overcrowding is most likely to occur, and I should like to see more cottages built with three bedrooms. Where there is a second sitting-room this, in some cases, is utilised as a bedroom.

The next table shows the rents paid (where ascertained) for these cottages. This gives a rental of 2/- a week or less paid for 45 out of 65 cottages, and in 12 more the rent does not exceed 3/-. Compared with town rents these figures are very low and they show how difficult it will be to build in this district houses with three bedrooms at a remunerative figure. It must be remembered, too, that most of these cottages get some garden ground and many a very fair piece, whilst allotments can also be obtained in, I believe, almost every case where a man desires one.

I have been very surprised in going my country rounds, at the time when men are going to or coming from their work in the town, to see the very large number that are residing in our district. I asked the Sanitary Inspector to enquire into these details, and from what he tells me I have compiled the table herewith. This only gives the approximate number of heads of families that work out of the district, and even if we remember several of the same family may work in the town, I believe from what I see that these numbers are understated. In any case they must be multiplied by 4—5 to get the true numbers of the full household. Wootton and Hardingstone are the two villages nearest to the town and naturally have the largest number working there, but even at Little Houghton ( $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles), Brafield ( $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles), and Denton (6 miles), people work in the town, in most cases bicycling backwards and forwards to their work. At Yardley Hastings six persons work at Wellingborough (5 miles), at Rothorpe 10 work at the neighbouring brickworks at Gayton, and at Roade 10 persons go by train daily to Wolverton to the L. & N.-W. R. carriage works. Thus out of a total population of about 7,500, I estimate that at the least 1,000 (with their dependants) work out of the district. This led me to enquire from the farmers whether they have a difficulty in finding cottages for their men, or whether they employ a smaller number than they used to do previously. From these enquiries I gather that a smaller number are employed on the land now. One large farmer tells me that he only employs about two-thirds of the number he used to employ, and that owing to the reduction in price of agricultural produce they have laid down more land as pasture, and also mechanical devices have enabled them to work with fewer men.

The invasion of country districts by town workmen is a difficult subject to treat. If more cottages were built they would be easily let to these town workmen, and directly a cottage is empty many applications from such persons are made for it. Consequently cottages are never empty, as living in the country rates are less and a piece of garden is also obtained, while the landlords are able to keep up or raise their rents. Should more cottages therefore be built, I do not think it is altogether to the benefit of the agricultural labourer that this policy should be pursued. They can hardly be built at a profit without some help and why should the villages be taxed to provide cottages for town workers? By their influx into the villages also these people tend to raise the rents, and they also are often the starting point of various infectious diseases brought back by them from the town, and the treatment of these at the infectious hospital is one more addition to the rates. I would, myself, far rather also live in one of these solidly-built houses than in the thin-walled jerry-built cottage it is now proposed to build so that there may be no addition to the rates in so doing. A recent writer, too, has planned a "model" cottage, the third bedroom of which is only  $7\frac{1}{2}$  ft. by  $6\frac{1}{2}$  ft. : surely this is far too small. It is also proposed to seriously cut down the present model bye-laws of the Local Government Board with the same object, but it is to be hoped that this remedy will not be pushed too far. It might be possible to allow cheaper materials to be used, but there should be no relaxation of the rules as to height of rooms, air space and ventilation.

As to the condition of the houses in the district, on the whole they are kept in a fairly good state by constant inspection. Many of the cottages are old and need frequent repair of roofs, windows, etc., but the walls are thick and substantial, keeping out the weather far better than the modern cottage. The difficulty is to keep them clean and white-washed more from the habits of the household than from any defect in the house. There has never been the least difficulty in getting the landlord to do any necessary repairs when application is made to him. Most difficulty is found in the matter of ventilation; being old the rooms are often very

low and the windows small, but of late years, in many cases, more windows have been made, especially with the view of getting cross ventilation through the houses.

Are there any slums in the district? Yes! and it must be so until the habits of the people are much improved. The lower class of agricultural labourers are often very dirty in their habits and these tend to congregate in the worst houses in each village. From long acquaintance with them I am inclined to let them stay there, but during my term of office many of these houses have been much improved in various ways. If these people are turned out of such dwellings and the houses are condemned they go into a class of dwelling a trifle higher and this class quickly becomes a slum. I have seen windows and doors smashed, kitchen floors recently paved broken to pieces by breaking coal on them, stair banisters and cupboard doors taken for firewood, and many abominations in outhouses, etc., caused by this class, and the landlord has no power to recover any penalty even if it could be awarded.

To improve these matters requires time and patience. Nothing can be done in a hurry and considerable progress has been made of late years by pulling down and re-building many of the worst houses, or turning two adjacent cottages into one. Education and inspection and introduction of better conditions of water supply and sanitation are doing a good deal in establishing a higher standard, and steady progress is being gradually made.

The question of "tied houses" in these districts has been much condemned by a recent writer. In this district unless some houses were retained by the farmer for his labourers the cottages would be at once seized upon by the town worker, and I have not found the landlord in these parts such a rapacious man as the writer depicts him. If a modified system of this sort were not in force here, the agricultural labourer would be very badly off. Very often a man, if he is worth his salt, remains all his life on a farm, and a farmer in these days does not part with a good man when he has got one.

I have endeavoured to treat this large subject fairly and of course only as it applies to this district. Abuses exist in other parts but I believe that they are here reduced to a minimum. I have treated of some of the remedies proposed to remedy certain of these evils, but to my mind most of them would not in practice prove effectual, in fact they might make matters worse in many respects. Even the introduction of a minimum wage would probably only aggravate the condition of the agricultural labourer. The labour bill of the farmer is always the largest item in his balance sheet, and it must be reduced as much as possible, hence more land would be sown down in pasture and more machinery would be introduced, possibly some land would go out of cultivation altogether.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

G. H. PERCIVAL,

Medical Officer of Health.



## COTTAGES IN HARDINGSTONE RURAL DISTRICT.

1	Sitting-room	1	Bedroom	...	...	...	9
1	"	2	"	...	...	...	20
1	"	4	"	...	...	...	2
2	"	1	"	...	...	...	1
2	"	2	"	...	...	...	18
2	"	3	"	...	...	...	4
2	"	4	"	...	...	...	3
3	"	3	"	...	...	...	7
4	"	2	"	...	...	...	2
Total							<hr/> 66 <hr/>

## RENTS.

10d. per week	...	...	...	...	2'
1/3	"	...	...	...	17
1/6	"	...	...	...	4
1/7	"	...	...	...	8
1/9	"	...	...	...	5
2/-	"	...	...	...	9
2/3	"	...	...	...	4
2/6	"	...	...	...	5
3/-	"	...	...	...	3
3/6	"	...	...	...	7
4/-	"	...	...	...	1
Total					<hr/> 65 <hr/>

## APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF HEADS OF FAMILIES RESIDING IN THE DISTRICT BUT WORKING ELSEWHERE.

Name of Parish.	No. of Persons.		Where Employed.
Cooknoe	...	3	Northampton
Hardingstone	...	22	"
Rothersthorpe	...	10	Northampton and Gayton.
Yardley Hastings	...	6	Wellingborough
Milton	...	6	Northampton
Hackleton	...	3	"
Denton	...	6	"
Brafield	...	16	"
Little Houghton	...	8	"
Great Houghton	...	18	"
Wootton	...	50	"
Road	...	10	Wolverton
Collingtree	...	3	Northampton
Courteenhall	...	2	"
Total		<hr/> 163 <hr/>	

